

Faroese language

Faroese^[4] (/ˌfɛəroʊˈiːz/ or /ˌfæroʊˈiːz/,^[5] Faroese: *føroyskt mál*, pronounced [ˈføːɪst mɔaːl]) is a North Germanic language spoken as a first language by about 72,000 people, around 49,000 of whom reside on the Faroe Islands and 23,000 in other areas, mainly Denmark.

It is one of five languages descended from Old West Norse spoken in the Middle Ages, the others being Norwegian, Icelandic, and the extinct Norn and Greenlandic Norse. Faroese and Icelandic, its closest extant relative, are not mutually intelligible in speech, but the written languages resemble each other quite closely, largely owing to Faroese's etymological orthography.^[6]

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History

Around 900, the language spoken in the Faroes was Old Norse, which Norse settlers had brought with them during the time of the settlement of Faroe Islands (*landnám*) that began in 825. However, many of the settlers were not from Scandinavia, but descendants of Norse settlers in the Irish Sea region. In addition, women from Norse Ireland, Orkney, or Shetland often married native Scandinavian men before settling in the Faroe Islands and Iceland. As a result, the Irish language has had some influence on both Faroese and Icelandic.

There is some debatable evidence of Irish language place names in the Faroes: for example, the names of Mykines, Stóra Dímun, Lítla Dímun and Argir have been hypothesized to contain Celtic roots. Other examples of early-introduced words of Celtic origin are: *blak*/*blaðak* (buttermilk), cf. Middle Irish *bláthach*; *drunnur* (tail-piece of an animal), cf. Middle Irish *dronn*; *grúkur* (head, headhair), cf. Middle Irish *gruaig*; *lámur* (hand, paw), cf. Middle Irish *lámh*; *tarvur* (bull), cf. Middle Irish *tarbh*; and *ærgi* (pasture in the outfield), cf. Middle Irish *áirge*.^[8]

Faroese	
<i>føroyskt mál</i>	
Pronunciation	[ˈføːɪst mɔaːl]
Native to	Faroe Islands, Denmark, Greenland
Ethnicity	Faroe Islanders
Native speakers	72,000 (2007) ^[1]
Language family	<div>Indo-European<ul style="list-style-type: none">Germanic<ul style="list-style-type: none">North Germanic<ul style="list-style-type: none">West Scandinavian<ul style="list-style-type: none">Insular Scandinavian<ul style="list-style-type: none">Faroese</div>
Early forms	<div>Old Norse<ul style="list-style-type: none">Old West Norse<ul style="list-style-type: none">Old Norwegian^[2]<ul style="list-style-type: none">Old Faroese</div>
Writing system	Latin (Faroese orthography) <div></div> Faroese Braille
Official status	
Official language in	 Faroe Islands
Recognised minority language in	 Denmark <div></div> Greenland
Regulated by	Faroese Language Board Føroyska málnevndin (http://www.fmn.fo/malnevndin/about.htm)
Language codes	
ISO 639-1	fo (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?iso_639_1=fo)
ISO 639-2	fao (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=137)
ISO 639-3	fao
Glottolog	faro1244 (http://



The Sheep letter (Faroese: *Seyðabrævið*) is the oldest surviving document of the Faroe Islands. Written in 1298 in Old Norse, it contains some words and expressions believed to be especially Faroese.^[7]

Between the 9th and the 15th centuries, a distinct Faroese language evolved, although it was probably still mutually intelligible with Old West Norse, and remained similar to the Norn language of Orkney and Shetland during Norn's earlier phase.

Faroese ceased to be a written language after the union of Norway with Denmark in 1380, with Danish replacing Faroese as the language of administration and education.^[9] The islanders continued to use the language in ballads, folktales, and everyday life. This maintained a rich spoken tradition, but for 300 years the language was not used in written form.

In 1823, the Danish Bible Society published a diglot of the Gospel of Matthew, with Faroese on the left and Danish on the right.

Venceslaus Ulricus Hammershaimb and the Icelandic grammarian and politician Jón Sigurðsson published a written

standard for Modern Faroese in 1854, which still exists.^[10] They set a standard for the orthography of the language, based on its Old Norse roots and similar to that of Icelandic. The main purpose of this was for the spelling to represent the diverse dialects of Faroese in equal measure. Additionally, it had the advantages of being etymologically clear and keeping the kinship with the Icelandic written language. The actual pronunciation, however, often differs considerably from the written rendering. The letter ð, for example, has no specific phoneme attached to it.

Jakob Jakobsen devised a rival system of orthography, based on his wish for a phonetic spelling, but this system was never taken up by the speakers.^[11]

In 1908, Scripture Gift Mission published the Gospel of John in Faroese.

In 1937, Faroese replaced Danish as the official school language, in 1938, as the church language, and in 1948, as the national language by the Home Rule Act of the Faroes. However, Faroese did not become the common language of media and advertising until the 1980s. Today, Danish is considered a foreign language, although around 5% of residents on the Faroes learn it as a first language, and it is taught in school from the first grade.^[12]

In 2017, the tourist board Visit Faroe Islands launched the Faroe Islands Translate, available in 13 languages including English, Chinese, Russian, Japanese, and Portuguese.^[13]

Old Faroese

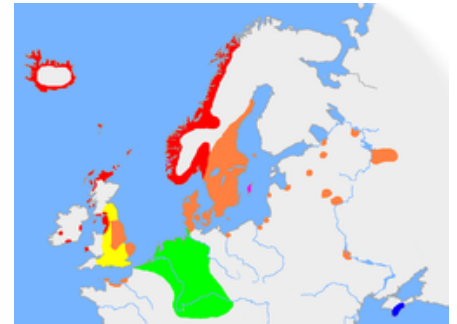
Old Faroese (*miðaldarføroyskt*, ca. mid-14th to mid-16th centuries) is a form of Old Norse spoken in medieval times in the Faroe Islands. The language shares many features with both Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian; Old Norwegian appears closer to Old Faroese, whereas Old Icelandic remained rather archaic compared to other medieval varieties of Old West Norse. The most crucial aspects of the development of Faroese are diphthongisation and palatalisation.^[14]

There is not enough data available to establish an accurate chronology of Faroese, but a rough one may be developed through comparison to the chronologies of Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian. In the 12th/13th centuries, *á* and *ǿ* merged as */ɔː/*; later on at the beginning of the 14th century, delabialization took place: *y*, *øy*, *au* > */i*, *ɔi*, *ɛi*; *í* and *ý* merged in addition to *i* and *y*, but in the case of *í* and *ý*, it appears that labialisation took place instead as is documented by later development to */*

glottolog.org/res
ource/lanuoid/i
d/faro1244)^[3]

Linguasphere

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The approximate extent of Old Norse and related languages in the early 10th century:

- ☐ Old West Norse dialect
- ☐ Old East Norse dialect
- ☐ Old Gutnish
- ☐ Old English
- ☐ Crimean Gothic
- ☐ Other Germanic languages with which Old Norse still retained some mutual intelligibility



The Famjin Stone, a Faroese runestone.

ʊɪ/. Further, the language underwent a palatalisation of *k*, *g* and *sk* before Old Norse *e*, *i*, *y*, *ø*, *au* > /kʲ, gʲ, skʲ/ > /cʲ, ɟʲ, ʃʲ/. Before the palatalisation *é* and *æ* merged as /ɛ:/ and approximately in the same period epenthetic *u* is inserted into word-final /Cr/ and /CrC/ clusters.

A massive quantity shift also operated in Middle Faroese. In the case of *skerping*, it took place after delabialization but before loss of post-vocalic *ð* and *g* /ɣ/. The shift of *hv* /hw/ to /kw/, the deletion of /h/ in (remaining) word-initial /h/–sonorant clusters (*hr*, *hl*, *hn* > *r*, *l*, *n*), and the dissolution of *þ* (*þ* > *t*; *þ* > *h* in demonstrative pronouns and adverbs)^[15] appeared before the end of the 13th century. Another undated change is the merger of *ϕ*, *ø* and *ó* into /ø/; pre-nasal *ϕ*, *ó* > *o*, *ó*. *enk*, *eng* probably became *eing*, *eink* in the 14th century; the development of *a* to /ɛ/ before *ng*, *nk* appeared after the palatalisation of *k*, *g*, and *sk* had been completed, such a change is quite a recent development, as well as change *Cve* > *Cvø*.

Development of vowels from Old Norse to Modern Faroese^[16]

9th century (Old Norse)	up to 14th century (Early Faroese)	14th–16th centuries (Old Faroese)		17th century (Late Old Faroese)				20th century (New Faroese)				
		North	South	North		South		North		South		
		long	long	long	short	long	short	long	short	long	short	
i	/i/	/iː/		/iː/	/ɪ/	/iː/	/ɪ/	[iː]	[ɪ]	[iː]	[ɪ]	i
y												y
e and æ	/e/	/eː/		/eː/	/ɛ/	/e/	/ɛ/	[eː]	[ɛ]	[eː]	[ɛ]	e
ø	/ø/	/øː/	/ø/	/øː/	/œ/	/øː/	/œ/	[øː]	[œ]	[øː]	[ɣ]	ø
u	/u/	/uː/		/uː/	/ʊ/	/uː/	/ʊ/	[uː]	[ʊ]	[uː]	[ʊ]	u
o	/o/	/oː/	/o/	/oː/	/ɔ/	/oː/	/ɔ/	[oː]	[ɔ]	[oː]	[ɔ]	o
ϕ	/ɔ/	/ɔː/		/øː/	/œ/	/øː/	/œ/	[øː]	[œ]	[øː]	[ɣ]	ø
a	/a/	/ɛː/		/ɛː/	/æ/	/ɛː/	/æ/	[ɛa]	[a]	[ɛa]	[a]	a
Long vowel -> Diphthong												
í	/yː/	/ʊɪ/		/ʊɪ/	/ʊɪ̥/	/ʊɪ/	/ʊɪ̥/	[ui]	[ʊɪ̥]	[ui]	[ʊɪ̥]	í
ý												ý
é and æ	/ɛː/	/ɛː/	/eː/	/ɛ ^a ː/	/ɛ ^a /	/eː/	/ɛ/	[ɛa]	[a]	[eː]	[ɛ]	æ
ø	/œː/	/œː/		/øː/	/œ/	/øː/	/œ/	[øː]	[œ]	[øː]	[ɣ]	ø
ú	/uː/	/ʊu/		/ʊu/	/ʊɣ/	/ʊu/	/ʊɣ/	[ʊu]	[ɣ]	[ʊu]		ú
ó	/oː/	/ɜu/	/ɔu/	/ɜu/	/ɜ/	/ɔu/	/ɔ/	[œu, ɛu]	[œ]	[ɔu]	[ɔ]	ó
á and ϕ	/ɔː/	/ɔː/		/ɔː/	/ɔ/	/ɔː/	/ɔ/	[ɔa]	[ɔ]	[ɔa]	[ɔ]	á
True diphthongs												
au	/œu/	/ɛɪ/		/ɛɪ/	/ɛɪ̥/	/ɛɪ/	/ɛɪ̥/	[ɛi]	[ɛ]	[ɛi]	[ɛ]	ey
øy	/œy/	/ɔɪ/		/ɔɪ/	/ɔɪ̥/	/ɔɪ/	/ɔɪ̥/	[ɔi]	[ɔ]	[ɔi]	[ɔ]	oy
ei	/æi/	/aɪ/		/aɪ/	/aɪ̥/	/aɪ/	/aɪ̥/	[ɔi]	[ɔ]	[ai]	[aɪ̥]	ei

Alphabet

The Faroese alphabet consists of 29 letters derived from the Latin script:

Majuscule forms (also called uppercase or capital letters)																												
A	Á	B	D	Ð	E	F	G	H	I	Í	J	K	L	M	N	O	Ó	P	R	S	T	U	Ú	V	Y	Ý	Æ	Ø
Minuscule forms (also called lowercase or small letters)																												
a	á	b	d	ð	e	f	g	h	i	í	j	k	l	m	n	o	ó	p	r	s	t	u	ú	v	y	ý	æ	ø

Phonology

Faroese vowels

	Front				Central		Back	
	unrounded		rounded		short	long	short	long
	short	long	short	long				
Close	<u>i</u>	i:	<u>y</u>	y:			ʊ	u:
Mid	ɛ	e:	œ	ø:			ɔ	o:
Open					a	a:		

As with most other Germanic languages, Faroese has a large number of vowels, with 26 in total. Vowel distribution is similar to other North Germanic languages in that short vowels appear in closed syllables (those ending in consonant clusters or long consonants) and long vowels appearing in open syllables. Árnason (2011) provides the following alternations:

Faroese vowel alternations^[17]

Monophthongs						
/i/	<i>linur</i>	['li : nʊɪ]	'soft'	<i>lint</i>	[lɪŋt]	'soft (N.)'
/e/	<i>frekur</i>	['fɹe : (ʰ)kʊɪ]	'greedy'	<i>frekt</i>	[fɹɛ ʰkt]	'greedy (N.)'
/y/	<i>mytisk</i>	['my : tɪsk]	'mythological'	<i>mystisk</i>	['mɪstɪsk]	'mysterious'
/ø/	<i>høgur</i>	['hø : ʊʊɪ ~ 'høœʊʊɪ]	'high (M.)'	<i>høgt</i>	[hœkt]	'high (N.)'
/u/	<i>gulur</i>	['ku : lʊɪ]	'yellow'	<i>gult</i>	[kʊ ɫt]	'yellow (N.)'
/o/	<i>tola</i>	['tʰo : la]	'to endure'	<i>toldi</i>	['tʰɔlɔɪ]	'endured'
/a/	<i>Kanada</i>	['kʰa : nata]	'Canada'	<i>land</i>	[lant]	'land'
Diphthongs						
/ʊi/	<i>hvítur</i>	['kvʊi : tʊɪ]	'white (M.)'	<i>hvítt</i>	[kvʊi ʰt :]	'white (N.)'
/ɛi/	<i>deyður</i>	['tei : jʊɪ]	'dead (M.)'	<i>deytt</i>	[tɛ ʰt :]	'dead (N.)'
/ai/	<i>feitur</i>	['fai : tʊɪ]	'fat (M.)'	<i>feitt</i>	[fai ʰt : ~ fɔi ʰt :]	'fat (N.)'
/ɔi/	<i>gloyma</i>	['klɔi : ma]	'to forget'	<i>gloymdi</i>	['klɔimɪɪ]	'forgot'
/ɛa/	<i>spakur</i>	['spɛa : (ʰ)kʊɪ]	'calm (M.)'	<i>spakt</i>	[spakt]	'calm (N.)'
/ɔa/	<i>vátur</i>	['vɔa : tʊɪ]	'wet (M.)'	<i>vátt</i>	[vɔ ʰt :]	'wet (N.)'
/ʊu/	<i>fúlur</i>	['fʊu : lʊɪ]	'foul (M.)'	<i>fúlt</i>	[fʊ ɫt]	'foul (N.)'
/ɔu/	<i>tómur</i>	['tʰɔu : mʊɪ ~ 'tʰœu : mʊɪ]	'empty (M.)'	<i>tómt</i>	[tʰœŋt ~ tʰɔŋt]	'empty (N.)'

Faroese shares with Icelandic and Danish the feature of maintaining a contrast between stops based exclusively on aspiration, not voicing. Geminated stops may be pre-aspirated in intervocalic and word-final position. Intervocalically the aspirated consonants become pre-aspirated unless followed by a closed vowel. In clusters, the preaspiration merges with a preceding nasal or apical approximant, rendering them voiceless.

Faroese consonants

		<u>Labial</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>	<u>Retroflex</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
<u>Nasal</u>		<u>m</u> m	<u>n</u> n	(<u>ɳ</u> ɳ)	<u>ɲ</u> ɲ	<u>ŋ</u> ɳ	
<u>Stop</u>	<u>plain</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>t</u>	(t)	<u>tʃ</u>	<u>k</u>	
	<u>aspirated</u>	<u>p^h</u>	<u>t^h</u>		<u>tʃ^h</u>	<u>k^h</u>	
<u>Fricative</u>	<u>central</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>s</u>	<u>ʂ</u>	<u>ʃ</u>		<u>h</u>
	<u>lateral</u>		<u>ɬ</u>				
<u>Approximant</u>	<u>central</u>	<u>v</u>	<u>ɹ</u>	(<u>ɻ</u> ɻ)	j	<u>w</u>	
	<u>lateral</u>		<u>ɭ</u>	(<u>ɭ</u> ɭ)			

There are several phonological processes involved in Faroese, including:

- Nasals generally assume the place of articulation and laryngeal settings of following consonants.
- Velar stops palatalize to postalveolar affricates before /j/ /e:/ /ɛ:/ /i:/ /ɪ/ and /ɛi/
- /v/ becomes [f] before voiceless consonants
- /sk/ becomes [ʃ] after /ɛi, ai, ɔi/ and before /j/
- /ɹ/ becomes retroflex following consonants in consonant clusters, yielding the allophones [ʂ ɭ t ɳ] while /ɹ/ itself becomes [ɻ], example: /rt/ is realized as [ɻ tʃ].
- Pre-occlusion of original /ll/ to [tʃ] and /nn/ to [tɳ].
- Pre-aspiration of original voiceless stops [^hp ^ht ^hk ^htʃ] after non-high long vowels and diphthongs /ɛa:/ /ɔa:/ /e:/ /o:/ /ø:/ or when a voiceless stop is followed by /n, l, r/. All long voiceless stops are pre-aspirated when doubled or in clusters [^hp: ^ht: ^hk: ^htʃ:].

Grammar

Faroese grammar is related and very similar to that of modern Icelandic and Old Norse. Faroese is an inflected language with three grammatical genders and four cases: nominative, accusative, dative and genitive.

Faroese Words and Phrases in comparison to other Germanic languages

Icelandic	Faroese	Norwegian (nynorsk)	Norwegian (bokmål)	Danish	Swedish	German	Dutch	Frisian	English
Velkomin	Vælkomin	Velkomen	Velkommen	Velkommen	Välkommen	Willkommen	Welkom	Wolkom	Welcome
Far vel; Farðu heill	Farvæl	Farvel	Farvel	Farvel	Farväl	Lebwohl	Vaarwel	Farwol	Farewell
Hvað heitir þú?	Hvussu eitur tú?	Kva heiter du?	Hva heter du?	Hvad hedder du?	Vad heter du?	Wie heißt du?	Hoe heet je?	Wat is dyn namme?	What is your name?
Hvernig gengur?	Hvussu gongur?	Korleis gjeng / går det?	Hvordan går det?	Hvordan går det?	Hur går det?	Wie geht's?	Hoe gaat het?	Hoe giet it?	How is it going? (How goes it?)
Hversu gamall (m) / gömul (f) ert þú?	Hvussu gamal (m) / gomul (f) ert tú?	Kor gamal er du?	Hvor gammel er du?	Hvor gammel er du?	Hur gammal är du?	Wie alt bist du?	Hoe oud ben je?	Hoe âld bisto?	How old are you?
Rautt / rauður / rauð	Reytt / reyður / reyð	Raud(t)	Rød(t)	Rød(t)	Rött / Röd	Rot	Rood / Rode	Read	Red
Blátt / blár / blá	Blátt / bláur / blá	Blå(tt)	Blå(tt)	Blå(t)	Blå(tt)	Blau	Blauw(e)	Blau(e)	Blue
Hvítt / hvítur / hvít	Hvítt / hvítur / hvít	Kvit(t)	Hvit(t)	Hvid(t)	Vit(t)	Weiß	Wit(te)	Wyt	White

See also

- [Faroese language conflict](#)
- [Goidelic languages](#)
- [Gøtudanskt accent](#)
- [Old Norwegian](#)

Further reading

To learn Faroese as a language

- Adams, Jonathan & Hjalmar P. Petersen. *Faroese: A Language Course for beginners* Grammar & Textbook. Tórshavn, 2009: Stiðin (704 p.) ISBN 978-99918-42-54-7
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- Richard Kölbl: *Färöisch Wort für Wort*. Bielefeld 2004 (in German)

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- Annfinnur í Skála / Jonhard Mikkelsen: *Føroyskt / enskt – enskt / føroyskt*, Vestmanna: Sprotin 2008. (Faroese–English / English–Faroese dictionary, 2 volumes)
- Annfinnur í Skála: *Donsk-føroysk orðabók*. Tórshavn 1998. (1369 pages) ISBN 99918-42-22-5 (Danish–Faroese dictionary)

- M.A. Jacobsen, Chr. Matras: *Føroysk–donsk orðabók*. Tórshavn, 1961. (no ISBN, 521 pages, Faroese–Danish dictionary)
- Hjalmar Petersen, Marius Staksberg: *Donsk–Føroysk orðabók*. Tórshavn, 1995. (879 p.) ISBN 99918-41-51-2 (Danish–Faroese dictionary)
- Eigil Lehmann: *Føroysk–norsk orðabók*. Tórshavn, 1987 (no ISBN, 388 p.) (Faroese–Norwegian dictionary)
- Jón Hilmar Magnússon: *Íslensk–færeysk orðabók*. Reykjavík, 2005. (877 p.) ISBN 9979-66-179-8 (Icelandic–Faroese dictionary)
- Gianfranco Contri: *Dizionario faroese-italiano = Føroysk-italsk orðabók*. Tórshavn, 2004. (627 p.) ISBN 99918-41-58-X (Faroese–Italian dictionary)

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- Tórður Jóansson: *English loanwords in Faroese*. Tórshavn, 1997. (243 pages) ISBN 99918-49-14-9
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- Petersen, Hjalmar P. 2010. *The Dynamics of Faroese-Danish Language Contact*. Heidelberg. Winter
- Faroese/German anthology "From Djurhuus to Poulsen – Faroese Poetry during 100 Years", academic advice: Turið Sigurðardóttir, linear translation: Inga Meincke (2007), ed. by Paul Alfred Kleinert

Other

- Barnes, Michael P.; Weyhe, Eivind (2013) [First published 1994], "7 Faroese", in van der Auwera, Johan; König, Ekkehard (eds.), *The Germanic Languages* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=DVBdAgAAQBAJ>), Routledge, pp. 190–218, ISBN 978-0-415-05768-4

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4. While the spelling *Faeroese* is also seen, *Faroese* is the spelling used in grammars, textbooks, scientific articles and dictionaries between Faroese and English.
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External links

- Føroysk orðabók (<https://web.archive.org/web/20080517125911/http://www.obg.fo/fob/fob.php>) (the Faroese–Faroese dictionary of 1998 online)
 - Sprotin (<http://www.sprotin.fo/>) (complete English–Faroese/Faroese–English and Danish–Faroese online dictionary)
 - Faroese online syntactic analyser and morphological analyser/generator (<http://giellatekno.uit.no/cgi/d-fao.eng.html>)
 - FMN.fo – Faroese Language Committee (<https://web.archive.org/web/20101209133511/http://www.fmn.fo/malnevndin/about.htm>) (Official site with further links)
 - 'Hover & Hear' Faroese pronunciations (<http://www.languagesandpeoples.com/Eng/Direct/Germanic/SglLgFaroeseStd.htm>), and compare with equivalents in English and other Germanic languages.
 - Useful Faroese Words & Phrases for Travelers (<http://goscandinavia.about.com/od/languagehelp/qt/faroese-phrases.htm>)
 - How to count in Faroese (<http://www.languagesandnumbers.com/how-to-count-in-faroese/en/fao/>)
 - Faroe Island Translate (<https://www.faroeislandstranslate.com/>)
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